1877—1915.

MISSION WORK -

AT . .

IKWEZI LAMACI,

HARDING, - - -

ALFRED COUNTY,

NATAL. - - -

By GILBERT GILKES.

1877—1915.

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Congregational Union, Church Aid and Missionary Society of South Africa

By GILBERT GILKES.

PREACHERS AND HELPERS AT IKWEZI AND ITS BRANCHES.

PAM,
FRICA
South -
South Africa

IKWEZI LAMACI.

ON four occasions during the last twenty years I have prepared short illustrated accounts of the work carried on at Ikwezi Lamaci by our friends Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison, and now it seems to me that the time has come again when it is due to those who have supported the work to have further news of its progress, and it is a very pleasant task to put before them fairly full particulars of what has been accomplished.

Steady growth marks each year. I want to allude particularly to one feature of the work which is very encouraging, and which illustrates a problem which necessarily engrosses the attention of all who are active in promoting Missionary effort in Foreign Fields. The work at and near Ikwezi Lamaci proves that with the help of one or two Foreign Missionaries a work may be established that becomes self-propagating. Heathen lands will not be Christianized by Foreign Missionaries alone. They may be the means of sowing the seed in

John M'pikwa, the Regent Chief, is in the centre of the picture, the fifth counting from the left, in the middle row.

the first place, but if they do their best work, their aim must ever be, so to live, and so to work amongst the native population as to encourage them to take the responsibility of the spread of the Gospel in their midst more or less on their own shoulders, without constantly looking to the Missionaries themselves for help and instruction. If my readers will look at the figures connected with the various branches of the work, and glance at the pictures of the numerous Native Teachers, Preachers, and Helpers, they will be able to realize what one man and his wife, with the help in later years of their son and daughter-in-law, can accomplish. To make this clear it becomes necessary to say a word or two concerning the past.

Thirty-eight years ago, at a Meeting of the Birmingham Young Men's Christian Association, the Birmingham Young Men's Missionary Association was formed, and undertook that for three years it would support a Missionary at Ikwezi. Soon after this Mr. Aitchison was married, and for a great part of their lifetime these two earnest workers have been living amongst the Natives, their life endeavour being to win them to Christ and to promote their welfare.

The Young Men's Missionary Society more than fulfilled its undertaking, but the work grew steadily until it was impossible for them to be the sole means of its support, but it has been their privilege for thirty-five years to contribute regularly to the funds, and to maintain an interest at home in this Mission Work that has helped very largely to its support.

The illustration on page 7, from a print in a former booklet, gives a good idea of what Mr. Aitchison found when he was first called to the work. There were very few of the natives in any way interested. Mr. Clark, who had commenced the work, was called to pioneering effort further inland, and Mr. Aitchison had the advantage of the introductory work which he had already accomplished. Since these days so long ago, the work has grown year by year. Steadfast persevering effort has, under God's blessing, led to a position which offers a very marked contrast to those early days, and it may be interesting to consider a few figures which are practically up to date.

There are thirteen Mission centres in addition to the work that is carried on in the various native kraals. A list of these and their distances from Ikwezi will be found on page 38. There are about 1,800 adherents. There

are two European lady teachers in the schools, five paid native evangelists, twelve lay preachers, fourteen women class leaders, and seven native teachers, and more than four hundred who are actually church members. The population in the district is scanty; page 38 in the Appendix will show how far distant some of the Mission stations are from the central station at Ikwezi Lamaci.

Out of 1,800 adherents about one-third are the children of Christian parents, who happily have not had to unlearn the evils and superstitions of heathenism; their influence tends more to leaven the tone of thought than if they had been brought up without the advantage of early Christian teaching. Such an advantage as is indicated by the fact just stated can only be found where the work has been going on for more than a generation, and anyone who thinks about this Mission will realize that our two friends who have borne the burden and heat of the day, are now in the evening of life, and the question of the future has had to be considered. How was this to be arranged for? Who would carry on the work when, in God's good time, they were removed to a new sphere of service in the Better Land? This question has been answered in a rather remarkable way, and now our friends have at their

IKWEZI LAMACI, 1876.

right hand, and growing in experience and usefulness that maturity brings, their son and daughter-in-law, the Rev. S. Gershom G. Aitchison and his wife. Some 19 years ago, when Mr. Gershom Aitchison was still a lad, his father and I talked over the question of his future, and as I have said in other booklets, Mr. Aitchison did not wish that his education should be such as to make it likely that he would *drift* into the Mission work as a matter of course. But the call came, and he left a valuable and gratifying public appointment under the Government, with good prospects, in order to join his father. In April, 1913, he married Miss Margaret E. L. Reid, a lady of kindred spirit, an efficient and devoted worker in connection with her Church, concerning whom fervent testimony was given by her Minister and colleagues, of service lovingly and cheerfully rendered in the

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Marchmont (Bilborough-Wallace Memorial) Branch is 18 miles from Ikwezi. The work at this place had entirely outgrown the buildings which had been provided in the first case. Through the generosity of the Rev. R. Wallace, a handsome addition has been made to the Church. The existence of such a Women's Meeting as is illustrated on the opposite page is a proof of the hold that the work has taken in this district. For want of space some of the members of the Women's Meeting have had to be cut out of the picture. There were thirty-seven in the original.

WOMEN'S MEETING AT MARCHMONT.

cause of her Lord and Master. Mr. Gershom Aitchison has received offers of various positions, but he feels that he must not leave that to which he has been called of God.

Land has become rather more valuable now than it used to be some years ago, but there was a period when it was possible to acquire a freehold on easy terms. Some special financial help was given which made a good start in the direction of obtaining the 2,000 acres which now belong to the Mission. Some of this land is let and brings in a small income. One hundred and seventy acres has been planted with wattles, the bark of which is saleable. Some forty acres is under cultivation. Thirteen families of natives find their homes on the Mission freehold, and in many ways, present and prospective, the advantage of ownership is realized. Before very long the railway will come within six or seven miles of the property, and this should tend to the development of the country. Some might be inclined to think that development is not altogether desirable, but one must

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The pretty verandah in which Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison and their son and daughter-in-law are standing bears witness to the pains which Mrs. Aitchison takes to make everything about the compound as attractive as possible.

THE MISSIONARIES' HOME.

remember that as Christainity leads to civilization with all its varied needs, development is essential, and it is a great thing to find the people plenty of work. The tendency to idleness is one of the tremendous forces on the side of superstition and every kind of evil, and all that can be done to induce self-effort is most useful.

A Report was made, several years ago, by the Native Affairs Commission, which dealt with the question of the education of the natives. It states that the Christian or educated native "wants more education, fixity of tenure on Mission Reserves, and suitable avenues for the employment of his children" while "inadequate facilities for education" are acknowledged.

The Government is not directly engaged in education, but it assists the work by Grants in Aid, for the most part made to or through Missionary Societies. The Report admits that the Government "not being financially able to erect even a fair number of Central Schools, the aid of the various Missionary Societies is indispensable for the continuance of the work of Education."

This recognition of Missionary effort is of great value, and to a large extent obviates the risk that always exists of intellectual advancement crowding out the spiritual

CHRISTMAS GATHERING AT IKWEZI.

instruction which must, in all well-directed Mission work, be regarded as of the highest importance. Civilization and high mental attainments are essential to the progress of millions of natives in South Africa, and education must ever be of the greatest value. The educated natives have, and will have such a part in the Evangelisation of the land that, on that ground alone, good education is essential, but first things must be kept first, and the main aim at Ikwezi must continue to be the extension, among the native races, of the Kingdom of God.

Our Missionaries have not only had on their minds the desirability of conducting their work in such a way as to lead to the establishment of a Church that would become self-propagating, but they have also desired to make the Mission as nearly as possible self-supporting, so that the growth might not be dependent ultimately upon large financial help from outside, for they hope the time will come when everything will be on such a scale that it will be impracticable to govern it from one financial centre. In time to come, and perhaps in days not so

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In the picture on the opposite page the contrast will be noticed between the building on the left of the picture and the school more recently erected.

GRIQUA CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

very far off, it should be the pride and care of those connected with each individual branch to provide for all extensions, and become independent and individual branches of the Church Universal. I will try and show how far it has been possible to go in the direction of self-support.

Let me then first explain that the land and permanent structures are vested in Trustees, and everything else, excluding school and church furniture, is the personal property of the Missionaries themselves. Last year the total expenditure, apart from special capital outlay, was £725. Towards this the natives contributed £45 in free-will offerings. They paid £25 in rent, the balance of profit on the farm operations was £25, the Government School grants £205, and the balance of £425 was contributed by the many friends in England and elsewhere, who for so many years have helped towards the maintenance of this work.

From the point of view of self-support, last year was not one of the best, for the wattle bark is not sold every

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Miss Bowles to the left of the picture and Miss Bjorseth to the right are carrying on the school illustrated opposite to the great satisfaction of the Government Inspectors.

GRIQUA SCHOOL AND TEACHERS.

year, and this materially affects the question. For Mr. Aitchison to have any balance in hand at the close of the financial year would be altogether unnatural and phenomenal, for he expends, and is willing to expend all money that comes to him in founding new branches, and building and staffing new schools, and there are useful channels of outlay for very large sums, and there can be no room for any doubt as to the wise expenditure of all means with which he is entrusted.

The steady growth of the work, and the solid basis upon which it has been established, bear evidence of the practical business ability, and if I may use the expression, the scantified common sense, which has been conspicuously to the front for very many years.

I have twice visited Ikwezi Lamaci and speak from personal knowledge, but men with greater experience than I have ever had in Mission work, have from time to time expressed in no measured terms their appreciation of the work done. The effort of the Missionaries for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the dark land in which they live, is made in childlike trust in Him who has led them through many difficult problems in peace and safety.

JOSEPH SIDOYI AND HIS ELWATENI ASSISTANT.

The Mission is in special need at the present time, for it has lost one of its oldest and most faithful supporters—Mr. E. A. Page, of Birmingham, who died a few weeks ago. He had been connected with it from the very beginning, and has acted as Secretary and Treasurer for the Birmingham Young Men's Foreign Mission Association. Someone will take his place, and a revival of interest amongst the present generation of the young men connected especially with the Y.M.C.A. in Birmingham, would be a happy way of marking their appreciation of his services, for it was in that Association that the work was established.

I do not think it would be easy to find any other missionary enterprise in which the whole of the contributions of the supporters are so directly used for the work. There has never been a paid Secretary, and there have never been any office or printing expenses, as the Annual Report, costing some £3 or £4, has been paid for year by year from outside funds.

In 1896 when I first visited Ikwezi, Mr. Aitchison had been there nineteen years out of the thirty-eight years of his service, and it is interesting to look back and contrast the position then with that which now exists. The

LEADERS OF THE WOMEN'S CLASS AT ELWATENI.

district under his care was very much smaller, and I was interested chiefly in the work amongst three tribes, those of Umbono, M'Lotwa, and M'Pikwa. Let me briefly recall these men.

I made Umbono's acquaintance as he sat outside the cattle kraal, his head man by his side, administering justice. A heavily built chief, with a blanket about him, for it was only on State occasions, and when he came amongst Europeans, that he gave up the native dress. He desired education and Christianity for his tribe, but frankly told me that he was too old to make any change in his own life, though he believed that Christianity was good for his people. An old tree stood within sight of his kraal, and there was a superstition connected with this. It was thought that when the tree died or was blown down, Umbono would die. Well, he has long since departed this life, but I do not know whether the tree has fallen.

M'Lotwa was the "rain maker." He claimed supernatural powers over nature's supplies. He too, thought well of Christianity, and to the Missionary admitted that

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Elwateni is nine miles from Ikwezi. The building is now too small for the number who attend.

A WEEK-DAY MEETING AT ELWATENI.

he had no power of governing the rain. But still if the people would send him a present in order to secure his services as a rain maker, he would accept it, so I fear he had not got very far on the way to a new life, although he attended services, and would sometimes call his people together for prayer. But he too passed away, and now his son reigns in his stead, and favours the preaching of the Gospel to his tribe, and has helped in the erection of a building for services and schools, at an out-station on the location.

In a booklet issued in 1896, I wrote of M'Pikwa. He suffered from some trouble in his chest when I visited him with Mr. Aitchison, but nevertheless he indulged in flowery language about the message of God's love, and the sacrifice that teachers made in coming so far to preach to the ignorant people. But he did not then get hold of the truth, for, two or three days later, he went away into hiding in the bush, believing that his illness was caused by sorcery which could not harm him if he

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Umnukwa's is 22 miles from Ikwezi and was commenced as an out-branch of Marchmont by a native on his own farm, in order to meet the needs of some old people and children who could not go far to school.

OPENING DAY AT UMNUKWA.

were hidden away from his enemies. M'Pikwa died this year, and it is a joyful thing to be able to say that he had been, during the last few years, a real Christian, favouring the Missionaries' work among his people, and openly confessing Christ as his Saviour. In course of time, his son, who is still a boy, will be Chief of his tribe. Meanwhile the Regent, the son of another wife, is a great help to the Mission in many ways.

It will be seen that, as far as concerns the three tribes in question, the old rulers who had been brought up in heathen superstition, and without any knowledge whatever of Christianity, have gone, and those who have followed them have grown up in the midst of a partly Christianized people, and the prospect of help from the Native Chiefs is consequently greater, and we may look forward to a more rapid growth in future, to more self-help in preaching and teaching, and as I have said, the winning of the people as a whole must depend upon their work in their own country.

Living within seven miles of Harding where a good

Umhlahlane is 25 miles from Ikwezi. It was built on the property of a kindly disposed farmer, who will transfer it to the Mission Trust as soon as he obtains his title to his farm.

UMHLAHLANA SCHOOL CHILDREN.

many Europeans are settled, and near the Griqua people, Mr. Aitchison has felt it right to give a good deal of his time and care to supply the spiritual needs of both Europeans and Griquas, and it is due to his residence in the district that a large and successful Griqua School has been carried on, and services regularly held in this remote little town.

Whenever I try to get information that may interest the supporters of this Mission, I always experience a difficulty that speaks for itself as to the character of the work. Our Missionaries make so little of the success that attends their work, and without grieving them, which I must certainly avoid, I cannot say what I should like to say about them, but I think that the list of out-stations and the numbers given concerning the Native Workers will convince my readers that there is a power in this work which is not of man.

The Missionaries seem to leave themselves out of consideration. They tell of the work that is accomplished, but they give all the glory to the Lord of the Harvest. In one letter I read the following:—

"There is no doubt of the fact that the work grows "and becomes more consolidated from year to year.

NATIVE EVANGELISTS UMHLAHLANA.

"This is evidenced by the advance made in all depart-
"ments. The Christian natives are more intelligent,
"more desirous of bettering themselves in every way,
"mentally, morally, and spiritually, and they are much
"more resourceful in using the material things around
"them. . . But the transition has been so slow and
"gradual that the process would appear like the husband-
"man watching the growth of his crops. He cannot
"appreciate the progress from day to day. But this does
"not mar the joy of harvest."

In writing this little treatise concerning the Mission work, I have no help from Mr. Aitchison except as to facts and figures. He has no knowledge of what I am saying; he will see no draft or proof. There is an advantage in this, as it enables me to say about him what he could not say himself. It is important that the supporters of the Mission should know something about the tone of thought that prevails, so I will quote from a letter just received in the ordinary course of a correspondence which has known no interval of silence since 1876.

"I often think what would we do were it not for the
"Lord Jesus. What a difference He makes. I have
"been much impressed lately with the words, 'Your

"Father knoweth what things ye have need of.' Father, "then give me what I need. I am writing you this "evening after a journey on horseback, on the thirty-"eighth anniversary of my arrival at Ikwezi, and my heart "is full of thanks for all the mercy, truth, and blessing "which the Lord has bestowed on me and mine during "all these years. . . We are all in fairly good health, "though my wife's rheumatism still clings to her. My "own health is good. I was going to say that my natural "strength is not abated, but the ride to-day on a strange "horse reminds me that I cannot stand a shaking up as "in the past without feeling it somewhat. But my first "ride from Durban, thirty-eight years ago was worse than "anything of the kind I have experienced since. . . . "I am glad to know that the statistics for the booklet "reached you. We are praying that the Lord will guide "you in every detail, and then He will use the booklet "as He knows how."

The steadfast spirit of their leaders pervades in a very large degree the numerous followers they have drawn around them. The photographic illustrations are very much the same sort of thing that the readers of Missionary pamphlets find more or less as a matter of course,

but I think that a little study of the pictures will be worth while. Some of the men and women have been converted from a heathen life ; some are the children of Christian parents. I am sorry I have not had the opportunity of inserting a contrast picture. The change is so extraordinary, and could have been better illustrated in that way. But even pictorial illustrations taken from life would very inadequately represent the difference that one observes when living amongst the people, between those who have come under Christian influence and those who have not.

There are many interesting men and women amongst the groups shown in the photographs. Some of them have been fellow workers with the Missionaries for a long course of years.

"Paulos M'Botwa and his wife are amongst the earliest "converts. They became Christians years ago. Their "heathen friends told them that if they gave up heathen-"ism all their children would die. They have had "thirteen children, and each one *has* been called Home, "but the severe trial has not shaken their faith. Paulos "and his wife Elizabeth live near Ikwezi with a grand-"daughter (an orphan) who attends to the needs of the "old couple.

MEMBERS OF THE ITHLUKU BRANCH.

"Joseph Sidoyi Ncaiyana is also one of the early "converts, and soon manifested an earnest desire to "preach the Gospel to his own people. He went to the "Lovedale Institution (then under the Rev. J. Stuart) "to undergo a course of training as an Evangelist, "after which he returned to Ikwezi full of fire and zeal. "Joseph is still a faithful and acceptable preacher."

There can be no question but that the European War has reduced the subscriptions and donations to the Missionary Societies. With regard to the little Mission of which I am writing, there has been no indication yet that those who contribute will have to reduce their subscriptions, but there may be cases in which reductions cannot be avoided, and the shortening of means must more or less seriously affect the development of the work. But there is a greater difficulty than this, for the Government in Natal has issued a circular notifying the curtailment of School Grants, and stating that no new schools can obtain any aid, and so even to Ikwezi Lamaci the effects of the War definitely come home. But is there not, even in this, a bright side, an opportunity of giving in circumstances that make it difficult to give. In family life we sometime find that there are things so dear to us

that whatever happens we manage to supply them, even though we must suffer personal inconvenience and difficulty by so doing. Surely it is not unfair to plead that our duty to obey the Master's command as to the extension of His Kingdom should be placed among those things that we *cannot* allow to be hampered for want of funds. Would it not be a grand thing in the history of this and other Missions if the records could show that such service was deemed to be of vital importance, and that a larger, rather than a smaller amount was contributed during these terrible times of War.

Apart from the cost of carrying on the Griqua School, the amounts spent in salaries and wages are only £126 a year, and in view of the fact that many teachers are employed in the work, there is no margin for the maintenance of Native Preachers, and no prospect of an increased grant to meet the increase of the educational work which is perfectly sure to take place as the work expands. The new schools must be provided for, and if, as I have already said, the land cannot be Christianized by Foreign Missionaries alone, provision to maintain Native Preachers is absolutely essential. We must hope and believe that

the extension of God's Kingdom in this comparatively small area will not be hindered by lack of funds.

It is doubtless difficult for those who live at home to realize to what good and lasting purpose any contributions will be devoted. Could my readers but visit the place, and there learn more about the needs, and see the contrast between the heathen life and the brightness of the Christian community, they would better understand the eagerness with which those who are interested in this work plead for additional means.

Mr. and Mrs. Aitchison have devoted their lives to the work. They have let go all home ties. They have established themselves among the people for whom they made this sacrifice ; they are happy and settled in their work ; the evening of their lives finds them still able to teach and shepherd the completely new generation that has so nearly taken the place of those amongst whom they laboured in the early years, and in their son and daughter-in-law they have had, and still have, the help they need. There is much work for them to do "Ere the sun goes down."

Rebekah, in the centre of the picture, is the mother of the Chief, and the leader of the Women's Class at Marchmont. The women on each side are her assistants in this work.

REBEKAH AND HER HELPERS.

APPENDIX.

Ikwezi Lamaci (Headquarters).		
Harding (European, Native, and Griqua, three centres)	... 6	miles from Ikwezi.
Pleasant View (European)	... 18	,, ,,
Cedarville (Griqua and Native)	... 6	,, ,,
Ihluku (Native)	... 9	,, ,,
Elwateni (Native)	... 9	,, ,,
Emjalisweni (Chief's Kraal, Native)	5	,, ,,
Kwanompukane (Native)	... 9	,, ,,
M'pikwa's ,,	... 6	,, ,,
Marchmont ,,	... 18	,, ,,
Mhlahlane ,,	... 25	,, ,,
Mpumalanga ,,	... 23	,, ,,
Mnukwa's ,,	... 22	,, ,,

In addition to the above, services are held at different centres amongst the Native Kraals.

REFEREES IN THE COLONY.

Rev. W. Dower, Port Elizabeth.

Alfred E. Green, Esq., Berea, Durban, Natal.

George Roger, Esq., Durban, Natal.

Hugh Parker, Esq., Pietermaritzburg, Natal.

Rev. R. Howie, D.D., Glasgow.

Rev. J. Sinclair, D.D., Durban.

Rev. D. Russell, Durban.

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